

## **ABSTRACT**

**Title:** Motivation of Special Olympics athletes for participating and leaving the Special Olympics Program in the Czech Republic

**Student:** Bc. Radka Příhodová

**Advisor:** PhDr. Aleš Kaplan, PhD.

**Objectives:** The main objective of this project is to explore motivation of Special Olympics athletes for participation in Special Olympics Program in the Czech Republic and the reasons why some of the athletes leave the program. A secondary objective is to learn more about Special Olympics coaches, athletes and their families, and to receive further details about coaches' and families perception of the Special Olympics Program.

**Methods:** The thesis is divided up into two sections: theoretical and the results. The theoretical section introduces the subject of mental handicap, different views of the term, the classification of the handicap and its etiology. With regard to common occurrence of Down syndrome among the population of people with mental retardation one chapter presents this chromosomal disorder. The profile the Special Olympics Program in the world and in the Czech Republic its philosophy and structure form the next part of the theoretical section. Very important component of the theoretical section is the comparison adaptive sport within the frame of the Special Olympics movement and Paralympics movement.

The research has the form of quantitative survey that solves relationships between variables. The survey gives to us also elementary statistical data about coaches, athletes and their families. The main research instrument was a questionnaire. With regard to personal visit of all Special Olympics clubs participating in the survey the second used method was interview. The final sample of this study included coaches Special Olympics athletes and their families.

**Results:** I managed to explain the issues of mental handicap and detailed description of Special Olympics movement. Each of the findings in this survey contributes to a comprehensive view of experiences of Special Olympics coaches, athletes and their families. The survey provided us with exact characteristics of Special Olympics coaches, including their experience, motivation for training and their suggestions in regard to program growth. Ideas for this included more extensive medial promotion of Special

Olympics program, ensure good communication between clubs and families and encourage athletes and their parents. The results demonstrate that coaches in the Czech Republic are very knowledgeable about families' expectations for their children's participation in Special Olympics.

Families provided me with a lot of valuable information about athletes. Special Olympics athletes are serious in their endeavor to be physically fit and to be competitive. Most of the athletes train once or more then once per week and almost one half of the athletes participate in physical activity beyond their participation in Special Olympics. Most athletes are participating in Special Olympics program for enjoyment, fun, to be with their friends and to compete and to win medals.

**Key words:** intellectual disability, mental retardation, Special Olympics, Down syndrome, motivation, families, coaches, athletes